

WARREN
MAGAZINE



VAMPI
#62

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VAMPIRELLA

AUG. 1977



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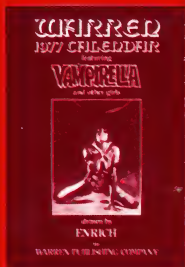
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VAMPIRELLA

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49 BY TREASON'S KNIFE Eric's mission was to assassinate Rommel, the Desert Fox. It would mean forfeiting his own life in the attempt but Eric was prepared. What made him ill was having to betray chums!

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Vampi's Scarlet Letters...

VAMPIRELLA #60 was a rather nostalgic issue in that the lead story, "The Return of the Blood Red Queen," reminded me of the VAMPI stories of old... tightly-plotted, superbly illustrated, genuinely excellent tales that leave us begging for more.

Bill DuBay's script returned many elements long missing from the series: continuity, references to past VAMPI episodes, and an open ending leaving us in suspense. The return of an old nemesis is always interesting, especially when the foe is female. However, I think the background of the Queen of Hearts could be explained better; who is she, where she came from, etc., but **DuBay** is probably planning to do this in a future issue.

I really only have two valid complaints with the story, the first of which is that I wish the Queen could have found some other means of subduing VAMPI than with knockout gas. Our heroine has become especially susceptible to these fumes of late (issues #53,55,65,58). Also, I thought the story lacked power because it crammed way too much information into too few pages. For a while you were experimenting with different story lengths, but now you've settled into a ten-page rut! I recall a story with a similar plotline, "Witch Queen of Bayou Parish," in issue #23, that was twice as long and was still exciting. After giving us two booklength epics, 18 or 20 pages an issue is not asking too much!

Artwise, **Jose Gonzalez** proved himself worthy of his **Warren Award**. Excellent job! I especially liked the splash page, with his evocative renderings of the Queen. Incredibly sensual!

R. ZIMMERMAN
Red Lion, Pa.

I noticed an error in "Force-Feed" published in VAMPIRELLA #59.

When Michael Sebastian looks through the mind-melder to experience Jack the Ripper's infamous activities, Jack uses his right hand to murder the woman.

Whoops!
Jack the Ripper was left-handed, as the coroners and criminologists learned, judging from the victim's wounds.

This is the second time within memory that a **Warren** magazine story has made this mistake.

I hope your artists and writers will keep this fact in mind for future stories.

Left-handed and proud of it.

STEPHEN DHUEY
Milwaukee, Wis.

What's this? Pendragon killed!

Who will be next? Conrad? Adam? Will VAMPI remain blind while poor old Pen is laid to rest?

Now I know that **Warren** heroes die occasionally, but I think that killing off any of the regular characters in the VAMPI series is a sacrilege!

DAVID FINLEY
New York, N.Y.

I just received the last few issues of VAMPIRELLA and they were fabulous as always.

The only disappointing issue I've ever read was #47. Since then, however, the covers have gotten much better and even sexy!

One word of advice, however. Don't fill the whole magazine with stories about continuing characters such as **Pantha**.

JOHN PATROS
Wappingers Falls, N.Y.

I am sorely disappointed in you people. VAMPIRELLA #59 was possibly the worst issue ever published.

The biggest fault, once again, rests with your writers.

VAMPI has been wallowing knee-deep in sleep-eeze ever since **Archie Goodwin** left. When will you get it going again?

Next, I have to wade through "Force-Feed," written by **Cary Bates**. Seven pages of a mildly amusing idea... all for one bad joke. Stories like this one should include some sort of warning at the outset, advising intelligent readers not to waste their time.

In "The Beast is Yet to Come," **Nicola Cuti** mystifies the pants off the reader by misspelling names and sticking us with an ending so obvious that it truly was a surprise.

Next we are treated to the newest in comicdom's line of boring amateurs, **Roger McKenzie**. His talent for consistently finding the most clichéd plots in comic book history and burdening them further with trite, overkill scripts and paper-thin characterizations is astounding.

We have one embarrassing cheap attempt at sympathy in "Changes," yet another boring **Warren** mood piece called "Funeral Day," complete with surprise (?) ending and still another sick joke turnaround titled "The Plot's the Thing."

Future **Warren** magazines containing more than one of this "writers' stories will be off my buying list immediately.

JOHN EGAN
San Mateo, Calif.

VAMPIRELLA #60 was that extreme rarity, a totally fine issue. From cover to cover there were no duds...indeed, no stories that I wouldn't rate at least as excellent.

"The VAMPIRELLA episode," "The Return of the Blood Red Queen," was certainly everything one could ask for. **Bill DuBay** skillfully blended three plotlines and finished off with the best cliffhanger ending since issue #43. The effect was greatly enhanced by giving VAMPI no dialogue at all on the last page...the terror on her face is enough. In any case, the thought of VAMPI disfigured is sufficient to make me queasy. I hope this storyline is carried straight forward to its conclusion, with none of those irrelevant fill-in issues.

Oops! By now I'm sure you realize that the footnote on page 9 is wrong. The intended reference is, of course, to "Carnival of the Damned" in VAMPI #11.

Son of Oops! When VAMPI changes into a bat on page 8, she is clad only in her usual attire, yet when she reverts to human form on page 11 she is wearing a coat. How did that happen? (Otherwise, need I say, **Jose Gonzalez** was up to standard.)

In the rest of the issue, "He Who Laughs Last...Laughs Best" was perhaps the least interesting story. Which is not to say that, in absolute terms, it wasn't excellent. **Bruce Jones** just tripped over his own complications in this story of double-crosses and triple-crosses. More positively, **Gonzalo Mayo** has turned out to be the best inker yet found for **Carmine Infantino's** pencils. No one would have thought, but their styles mesh well together.

"Riding Shotgun": what a pity there's no **Warren Award** category for Best Story Title. This one fulfilled the two prime requirements: a) it gave no clue to what the story was about, and b) it was the only title that fit. The story that **Gerry Boudreau** created to go with it wasn't bad, either...aided by **Luis Bermejo's** finest art yet. How about a sequel, telling us what happens when **Buck** finally does meet **Shotgun** again?

"Wish You Were Here" may have been a rather slight piece, but it was well told in **DuBay's** inimitable style and **Jose Ortiz's** illustrations certainly did nothing to retard it.

The final tale, "Fallen Angel," was a fine wrap-up to the issue. I'm still not completely sold on the "sideways style," but **Esteban Maroto** used it to good advantage here.

Once again, congratulations on a fine issue all around. May the time come when every issue is as good as this one.

BRIAN CADEN
Cincinnati, Ohio

VAMPIRELLA #60 was terrific. It was really great seeing the **Blood Red Queen** of Hearts return even more dangerous than ever.

Warren, how about creating a team of heroines?

WILSON RIVERA
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Enrich's cover for VAMPIRELLA #60 was out-of-sight. It should become a poster.

Jose Gonzalez's artwork in "The Return of the Blood Red Queen" showed why we won that **Warren Special Award**.

Bill DuBay has really brought back the deadly VAMPI...she is at her best when she is facing a dangerous foe. How about another team-up between VAMPI and **Flour** in a future issue?

Bruce Jones, **Carmine Infantino**, and **Gonzalo Mayo** made "He Who Laughs Last" a great tale.

CHARLES HASKELL
New York, New York

VAMPIRELLA #60 exemplified the variety and quality we readers find synonymous with anything bearing the **Warren** logo.

The cover by **Enrich** was catchy...maintaining a blend of shade and brilliance, depicting VAMPI in the grasp of one of her countless foes.

The VAMPI tale, "Return of the Blood Red Queen," brought **Pendragon's** true emotions to play in an exciting new entry. It also left both **Pen** and VAMPI in dangerous predicaments, adding to the general excitement. Congrats to **Bill DuBay** and **Jose Gonzalez** on this terrific series.

"He Who Laughs Last...Laughs Best," by **Bruce Jones**, **Carmine Infantino**, and **Gonzalo Mayo** was the blackest comedy of all!

"Riding Shotgun," by **Gerry Boudreau** and **Luis Bermejo** was my favorite story because I could identify with the hero, though I doubt I could face that soul-sucking succubus the way he did.

The fourth and fifth tales were fantastic voyages into the two areas man knows the least about: outer space and inner space...the sea. The art and stories for both were great.

For a new series in VAMPIRELLA, I suggest one about **Snivel**, **Merlin's** female companion (ERIE #67 and 74), narrated by her so as to keep with the tradition of featuring only female heroines in VAMPI.

STEPHEN PIROS
Edison, N.J.

VAMPI'S SCARLET LETTERS

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IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE MAD WOMAN WHO CALLED HERSELF THE **QUEEN OF HEARTS**. SHE WANTED ONLY TO BE CONSORT TO THE **MAD GOD CHAOS**. TO ACCOMPLISH HER GOAL, SHE HAD ONLY TO COLLECT TEN **LIVING HEARTS**. BUT SHE WAS NEVER TO SUCCEED.



AN UNKNOWN **VAMPIRELLA** FOILED HER PLANS AND INADVERTENTLY CAUSED THE **BLOOD RED QUEEN** TO LOSE HER **SIGHT**.*

*SEE **VAMPIRELLA #49**: "THE **BLOOD RED QUEEN OF HEARTS**!"

VENGEANCE! THE BLINDED **QUEEN** WOULD NOT REST UNTIL THE **BLOOD-SWEET TASTE OF REVENGE** WAS HERS.



AND NOW APPROPRIATE THAT **VENGEANCE** SEEMED...WHEN THE **EYES** OF THE GIRL SHE SO DE TESTED RESTED IN THE **PALM** OF HER **BLOOD-BATHED HAND!****

YET, **VENGEANCE** WAS NOT ENOUGH! THERE WAS STILL THE DESIRE TO RULE AT THE SIDE OF A **VILE GOD!** AND THERE REMAINED THE NEED FOR TEN **HUMAN HEARTS** IN **SACRIFICE!** THE FIRST OF WHICH WAS **CUT** FROM THE **BODY** OF AN **AGED MAGIC MAN!****



SEE OUR **LAST HORRIFYING ISSUE!

BUT THE **BLOOD QUEEN'S** CORONATION WAS **NEVER** TO **BE**. A **MUSKY OLD BOOK**...A **PAIR** OF **PETTY THIEVES**...

...AND A **RAMPAGING DEMON** MERGED TO END HER **RULE!**

THE **BLOOD QUEEN'S** DREAM LAY AS **BROKEN** AND STILL AS HER **LIFELESS SOUL!**



**Starpatch
Quark &
Mother
BLITZ**





DAD! WHAT IS IT? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

IT...IT'S VAMPIRELLA'S EYES, SON!

I WAS ABLE TO USE PSYCHIC ABILITIES TO SEE WITH THEM! BUT I...I COULD FEEL AS WELL! IT'S AS THOUGH VAMPIRELLA'S EYES WERE MY OWN!

AND...AND THE PAIN! SUDDENLY I FELT SUCH PAIN! THAT WOMAN...WHOEVER SHE WAS...MUST HAVE SOMEHOW HARMED VAMPIRELLA'S MISSING EYES!



GOOD LORD, DAD! NOOO! WHAT...WHAT WILL WE DO NOW?



WE'VE GOT TO TRY TO LOCATE THAT WOMAN AND HOPE THAT SHE HASN'T DAMAGED THOSE DELICATE ORGANS...OR VAMPIRELLA MAY NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE AGAIN!



WHY? WHY WOULD SOMEONE DO THIS TO VAMPI?

AND WHY WOULD SOMEONE CUT PENDRAGON'S HEART FROM HIS CHEST?

WE MAY NEVER KNOW, ADAM! I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL THAT WE FOUND VAMPIRELLA IN TIME TO GET HER TO MEDICAL ATTENTION.

I'M ONLY SORRY WE WERE TOO LATE TO HELP POOR PEN!



CAN'T...CAN'T THE DOCTORS DO SOMETHING, DAD?

THERE'S NOTHING TO DO, ADAM. YOU CAN'T REPLACE A HUMAN HEART! PEN IS GONE!

BUT THERE'S STILL VAMPIRELLA! AND IF WE HURRY, WE MIGHT YET SAVE HER!

MY PSYCHIC SENSES SHOULD LEAD US TO HER MISSING EYES!



I ONLY PRAY TO GOD WE'RE NOT TOO LATE!

AS CONRAD AND ADAM VAN HELSING RACE ON THEIR IMPOSSIBLE QUEST, THERE ARE OTHERS, SINISTER AND MYSTERIOUS, WHO ARE EVEN MORE...



HEY, MANNY... DIDJA SEE THAT GUY WITH THE BACK BRACE?

POOR DUDE MUSTA BEEN IN ONE HELLAVA CRACKUP!

TH-THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN, MAN! HE... HE HAD A TELEVISION SET FOLLOWING HIM!



I'M SORRY, SIR! VISITING HOURS ARE OVER--!

OH, UH... HOW THOUGHTLESS OF ME...! IT MUST BE THE EMERGENCY ROOM YOU WANT!

HU... SIR...!?



DID YOU SEE THAT, MABEL? HE WALKED RIGHT BY ME!

SO...? AS LONG AS HE KNOWS WHERE HE'S GOING, WHY STOP HIM?



BUT... HE'S HEADED FOR THE ISOLATION WARD!



VAMPIRELLA







THIS IS THE PLACE, SON. BUT I SENSE SOMETHING TERRIBLY **WRONG!** T-THE EYES... THEY'RE NO LONGER **HERE!**

IF THAT'S **SO**, DAD... THEN MAYBE WHO-EVER **IS** HERE WILL TELL US WHAT'S **HAPPENED** TO THEM!



N-NO! D-DON'T HURT US... PLEASE!

H-HERE! THE **DEVIL** BOOK... IT... IT'S **YOURS!** TAKE **EVERYTHING!** BUT LEAVE US **BE!** D-DON'T LET THEM **DEVIL CREATURES** GET US NO MORE!



CREATURES? WHAT **CREATURES?** YOU MEAN **DEMONS?**



YOU'VE USED THIS BOOK TO CONJURE **CHAOS'** DEMON SERVANTS?

P-PLEASE... W-WE DIDN'T MEAN NOTHIN'!



CHAOS? MONSTERS? OH LORD ADAM... WHAT HAVE THEY UNLEASHED?

UGHNN!

W-WHAT IS IT, DAD? WHAT DO YOU SEE?

OH LORD, ADAM...! IT... IT'S A **MONSTER!**

I... I CAN SEE IT CLEARLY...



...A... A MONSTER...! AND IT HAS **VAMPIRELLA!**

OH NO! NOT AGAIN!







LIKE **VAMPIRELLA**, WE TOO WERE ONCE **OUTCASTS**! CASTAWAYS ON PLANETS ALIEN TO OUR NATURE! UNWANTED AND UNLOVED BY OUR ADOPTED HOMEWORLDS.

MOTHER BLITZ FOUND EACH OF US. SHE'S A **SENSITIVE** CREATURE WHO HAS ROAMED THE GALAXIES FOR **EONS**!

SHE HEARD OUR **SOULS** SCREAMING OUT IN **AGONY**... IN **ABJECT LONELINESS**! JUST AS SHE HEARD **VAMPIRELLA'S** AGONIZED SOUL!



SHE RESCUED US...! GAVE US A HOME ABOARD THIS SHIP! AND GAVE US A **CAUSE**! TO SEEK OUT HOMELESS **OTHERS** LIKE OURSELVES



...AND **GIVE** THEM COMPANIONSHIP...HOME... AND **LOVE**!



AUSPICIOUS FOR US THE GOOD MOTHER CHANCED UPON US WHEN SHE DID! HEAVEN **KNOWS** WHERE MY SOMNIFEROUS OLD BONES WOULD BE NOW IF NOT FOR **HER**!

PEN!?!

YOU...YOU'RE **ALIVE**!

THAT BOY ALWAYS WAS AN **ASTUTE** LAD!



BUT **NOW**, PEN? WE...I...SAW YOU... **D-DEA--!**

DEAD? NOT QUITE. YOUNG S'R! WHAT YOU SAW WAS THE OLD GENTLEMAN'S **HEART** REMOVED FROM HIS ANATOMY!

IT ISN'T TOO DIFFICULT FOR A STAR DOCTOR TO **RE-PLACE** SUCH FUNDAMENTAL ORGANS!

RIGHT **FINE** JOB YOU DID TOO, DOC! MY COMPLIMENTS. SEND ROUND YOUR **BILL** ANYTIME!



WELL...I JUST GOTTA SAY...I DON'T BELIEVE **NONE** OF IT! **VAMPI**! WELL AGAIN... **PEN** ALIVE AND KICKING...

...THIS HAS TO BE THE FIRST TIME EVERYTHING'S COME OUT **RIGHT** IN THE END!

END, ADAM? WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THIS IS THE END? IT LOOKS LIKE THE START OF A WHOLE NEW **BEGINNING**!

THE COMIC BOOKS

By Joe Brancatelli

Every time I try to write this item, I break out in uncontrollable laughter, but here it is anyway: Marvel Comics Group will begin publishing *Yogi Bear*, *The Flintstones*, *Scooby Doo* and *Dyno Mutt* sometime in the near future. No kidding.

From a strictly dollars and cents standpoint, Marvel's decision to publish these books—and the logistics for implementing it—makes perfect sense. Since Marvel's agreement with Hanna Barbera, the owners of the characters, calls only for Marvel to publish the books—they will have no control over the editorial content, thus will have no chance to destroy the titles—it seems to be a fairly profitable arrangement. It just that the thought of Marvel publishing these children's titles invariably triggers memories of the fan satirists of the 1960s who had field days lampooning the Marvel style by applying it to characters like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck.

Anyway, Marvel's agreement with Hanna Barbera calls for an initial bi-monthly schedule for the four books and increased frequency and additional HB-licensed books should sales be encouraging. Three of the books were being published by Charlton before it went out of business, but the fourth, *Dyno Mutt*, is apparently tied to a new Hanna Barbera television cartoon show scheduled for the fall.

All the editorial work will be supervised by 67-year-old Chase Craig, who retired as Gold Key's executive editor in 1975. Craig won't be working for Marvel per se, however, nor will he be employed by Hanna Barbera. He's set up a shop on the West Coast and will supervise the editing, writing and drawing of the strips as a package and then ship them off to Marvel for publishing.

Many of you dyed-in-the-wool superhero fans may not recognize Craig's name, but he's enjoyed a long and illustrious career in the funny animal and children's humor business. He's worked for Walter Lantz, the creator of Woody Woodpecker, Warner Bros., now Warner Communications, DC's parent company, and has written many titles in the Little Golden Book series. At Gold Key, he wrote thousands of adventure comics as well as *Looney Tunes*, *Bugs Bunny* and *Porky Pig*. He joined Gold Key as an editor in 1950, became managing editor, then executive editor and has handled everything from *Tarzan* to *Magnus, Robot Fighter* to the Disney characters.

As for the creative team, Mark Evanier has been scripting all of the books produced so far, but it seems likely that other writers will be added when he returns to television writing at the start of the new season. Dan Spiegel may be drawing *Scooby Doo*, while Roger Armstrong, a long-time children's comics illustrator, will be drawing *The Flintstones* and *Yogi Bear*.

Evanier, who worked for Craig at Gold Key before moving on to television writing, called Craig "the best editor I ever worked for, so when he called me, of course I began writing for him."

No one at Marvel headquarters in New York wanted to talk about the new line—"who really cares," sniffed one editor, obviously not realizing the books will probably be paying his salary before long—but it's understood that each title will have 19 pages of stories rather than Marvel's standard 17.

Still, there's something in me that's disappointed. How it would have warmed my fanish heart to see Marvel controlling the

titles and making Boo Boo, Yogi's sidekick, into a junkie, or watch them inject a little young lust into the Pebbles and Bam-Bam relationship. Stan Lee only knows what could have been done with a chap called Dyno Mutt. Maybe he could have been teamed with Howard the Duck and...

Here's a cutie for you. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the government's commerce watchdog, has ordered the Hudson Pharmaceutical Corp. to stop advertising Spider-Man brand children's vitamins.

The government action, which United Press International called "precedent-setting," is couched in the standard bureaucratic legalisms, but basically said Hudson's advertising of the drug was misleading because it suggested that taking vitamins would make you as strong as Spider-Man. Hudson, doing its best to be contrite, said it would pull the offending advertisements voluntarily.

Nice of them, don't you think, especially since they fought the action tooth-and-nail for two years and engaged in advertising practices one FTC commissioner claimed was "really disgusting hype aimed directly at children. I don't think I've ever seen anything as venal in all my years on the commission," he told me after the decision was announced.

And should you think this bureaucrat was doing his little hype job by taking an extra blast at Hudson, consider this: when I was covering the FTC's hi-fi price-fixing investigation in 1975, he was the government official who told me—off the record, of course—that "no one minds a little price fixing here and there. No one minds a little gouging every now and then." In other words, he's not given to moral outrage very of-

ten.

Hudson, by the way, is owned by Cadence Industries, the conglomerate that owns Marvel comics.

SPEAKING OF HYPE...

If you've noticed a sharply increased amount of DC news in your favorite fanzine lately, credit it to the yeoman work of Mike Gold, the company's new public-relations man. Gold, who's also the man behind DC's telephone "hot line," has been busily churning out literally dozens of press releases about the most insignificant little occurrences at National. Every week brings another set of press releases, covering artist and writer changes, editorial readjustments and the whole gamut of boring, vapid and insignificant trivia fanzines eat up.

Gold, of course, seems a decent sort for a PR man and is just doing his job by grinding this stuff out. It's the fanzine editors that bug me. They all seem to be in the habit of reprinting his stuff verbatim, letting it all pass for "news" and go blissfully along without doing any checking or further investigating. Like any good flak, Gold isn't trotting out the bad news, only the good. In other words, under the guise of communicating with the fans, DC is once again attempting to lull everyone to sleep.

And Gold seems to go out of his way to play the ostrich. "I only worry about DCI (DC comics) and never get involved with WCI (Warner, the parent company)," he told me one day. He couldn't—or wouldn't—even tell me when Warner's annual stockholder's meeting was scheduled for, even though the date is a matter of public record, must be reported to the Securities and Exchange Commission and is printed on every copy of Warner's annual report.

THERE HAD BEEN TOO MUCH SPECULATION WASTED ON IT FOR IT TO HAVE BEEN A **MYTH**. TOO MUCH MONEY SPENT BY THE GREAT POWERS INVESTIGATING THEIR **ORIGIN**...AND THEN THERE HAD BEEN TOO MUCH **SILENCE**.

IT WAS MY INTENTION TO **BREAK** THAT SILENCE. I HAD SPENT MOST OF MY ADULT LIFE PURSUING **U.F.O.s**. I HAD DEVELOPED AN UNCONVENTIONAL THEORY CONCERNING THEM AND NOW THAT THEORY WAS ABOUT TO BE **TESTED**.

UFO



U.F.O.s HAD BEEN ON THIS EARTH **BEFORE**, THIS I KNEW. IN ANCIENT TIMES THEY WERE, INDEED, CHARIOTS OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL "**GODS**."

I HAD BECOME **CONVINCED**, FROM THE FREQUENCY AND LOCATION OF THE SIGHTINGS, THAT IN THIS AGE...AT THIS TIME...THE "**GODS**" HAD **RETURNED**. I NOW SOUGHT **PROOF!**



DID YOU WRITE THIS ARTICLE ON **U.F.O.s**?

YES, I'M **RONA HELDER**.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD THAT PHOTO?



THE FILM WAS FLOWN IN THIS MORNING. WHY DO YOU ASK?

I'D LIKE TO TALK TO THE **PHOTOGRAPHER**. THE PICTURES BEEN **RETOUCHED**, OF COURSE.





THE **SAUCER** WAS DOWN THERE.
I THINK IT HAD HAD A **BREAKDOWN**...YOU
SAW THE PHOTO...IT WAS HALF BURIED IN THE
SNOW AND MAKING AN AWFUL RACKET.

I TOOK SEVERAL SHOTS, BUT
I WAS AT THE END OF THE ROLL AND
ONLY THE **ONE** CAME OUT. THEN I GOT THE
HELL **OUT** OF THERE. I WAS SCARED STIFF,
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH.

I CAME **BACK** EARLY THIS
MORNING BUT IT HAD **DISAPPEARED**.

YOU THINK I'M
NUTS, **TOO**, RONA?

ANYBODY WHO HIKES
IN SUB-FREEZING WEATHER
FOR FUN IS NUTS, MICK.

SEE THAT PATCH OF
SLICK **ICE** OUT THERE WHERE
THE SAUCER CRASHED? LET'S
GO DOWN AND CHECK IT OUT.

DURING HIS HIKE MICKEY HAD STUMBLER ONTO TO SOMETHING **BIG**. I
WAS **CERTAIN**. I COULD HARDLY CONTAIN MY EAGERNESS AS WE
STRUGGLED DOWN THE SLOPE TO THE CRASH SITE BELOW.

SOME SOURCE OF **ENERGY** MUST
HAVE CREATED ENOUGH **HEAT** TO MELT THE
SNOW. THIS ICE HAS BEEN FORMED ONLY **RECENTLY**
...SOME TEN OR TWELVE HOURS AGO, I'D GUESS.

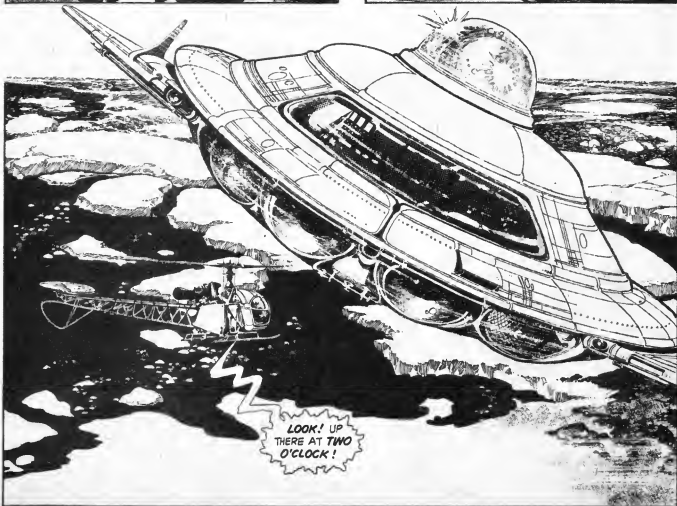
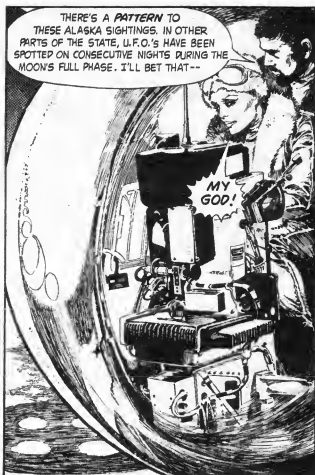


HEY, THAT'S RIGHT! BY
TOMORROW, THE ICE WILL BE
WHITE ALL THROUGH, NOT
CLEAR LIKE GLASS.



RONA TELLS ME
YOU CAN FLY A
COPTER, MICKEY.

HOW'D YOU LIKE TO
FLY US OUT HERE **TONIGHT**...
AND MAYBE TRACK A U.F.O.
TO ITS LAIR?



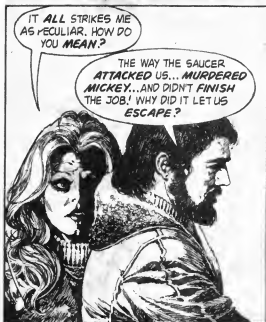






WE'RE IN **LUCK!** THE SKY IS CLEAR AND THE MOON IS VERY BRIGHT!

SAY, RONA... DOES SOMETHING STRIKE YOU AS VERY **PECULIAR** ABOUT ALL OF THIS?



IT **ALL** STRIKES ME AS **PECULIAR**. HOW DO YOU **MEAN?**

THE WAY THE SAUCER **ATTACKED** US... **MURDERED** MICKEY... AND DIDN'T **FINISH** THE **JOB!** WHY DID IT LET US **ESCAPE?**



WE TREKKED ON THROUGH THE BITING COLD TILL WE REACHED THE PLACE WHERE THE SAUCER HAD **DISAPPEARED**.

IT CAME DOWN **THERE**. BUT WHERE DID IT GO?

SEE THAT **OPENING** IN THE **ROCK FACE**. COULD IT HAVE FLOWN INTO **THAT?**



WE **CROSSED** THE **VALLEY**, KEEPING TO THE **SHADOWS**, HOPING TO AVOID BEING SEEN BY ANY **LOOKOUTS** THE **ALIENS** MIGHT HAVE POSTED AT THE **CAVE'S** **ENTRANCE**. OUR **CAUTION** PROVED **UNNECESSARY**.

NO LOOKOUTS! THEY DON'T SEEM **WORRIED** ABOUT BEING **DISCOVERED**. IT'S ALMOST AS IF THEY'RE **INVITING** **DISCOVERY**.

LOOK HOW **SMOOTH** THE **WALLS** ARE. THEY HAVE THE SAME **ICY GLAZE** AS THE **SPOT** WHERE **MICKEY** **DISCOVERED** THE **DOWNED SAUCER**.



IT COULD ALMOST **HOUSE...**

GOOD LORD!



ALTHOUGH YOUR MESSAGE WAS RECEIVED WITH UNDERSTANDABLE **SKEPTICISM**, DR. BROWN, WE IMMEDIATELY **DISPATCHED** A RECON SQUAD TO THE REGION YOU INDICATED.

WE **CHECKED** THE AREA THOROUGHLY AND FOUND **NOTHING**.

BUT THE CAVE...?

THERE HAS BEEN SOME **SEISMIC ACTIVITY**... THE CAVE YOU REPORTED MAY HAVE **DISAPPEARED** IN THE **EARTHQUAKE**...IF IT **EXISTED** AT ALL!

YOU'RE A **RATIONAL SCIENTIST**, DR. BROWN. THIS... THIS **HALLUCINATION** WAS, NO DOUBT, BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE SHOCK OF YOUR 'COPTER CRASH!

I TELL YOU, SIR, THIS IS **MORE** THAN A CRACKPOT PROFESSOR'S **IMAGININGS**. I KNOW THEY'RE OUT THERE **SOMEWHERE**...PLOTING...PLANNING TO TAKE OVER THE **EARTH**!

REALLY, DR. BROWN. I MUST ASK YOU AND MS. HELDER TO **DROP** THE MATTER. THE AIR FORCE DOES NOT **ENJOY** LOOKING **FOOLISH**...AND WE CAN BE OF NO FURTHER **ASSISTANCE** TO YOU!

THEN I **UNDERSTOOD**. IT ALL MUST HAVE WORKED OUT EVEN BETTER THAN THE **ALIEN'S** COULD POSSIBLY HAVE **HOPED**.

RONA HAD **WRITTEN UP** THE ARTICLE ON OUR **DISCOVERY** AS SOON AS WE REACHED NEW YORK, AND IT HAD RECEIVED A LOT OF PUBLICITY. THEN THE **AIR FORCE** HAD CHECKED IT OUT.

OF COURSE, THEY HAD **FAILED** TO DISCOVER ANYTHING. THE **ALIENS** HAD SEEN TO THAT...CAUSING A QUAKE TO DESTROY ALL EVIDENCE OF THEIR CAVE.

NOW I WAS PUBLICLY **DISCREDITED**. NEITHER THE PRESS NOR THE AIR FORCE WOULD **BELIEVE ME** AND ANYONE ELSE WHO MADE A SIMILAR DISCOVERY WOULD AGAIN BE INTIMIDATED INTO **SILENCE**.

OF COURSE, THEY **REGRETTED** THAT THEY **HADN'T LISTENED** WHEN THE FLEETS OF ALIEN CRAFT HOVERED OVER THE WORLD'S **MAJOR CITIES**...**IMPERVIOUS** TO ANYTHING THE WORLD'S AIR FORCES COULD SEND TO DESTROY THEM.

AND WHEN THE LIGHTS ON BROADWAY BLINKED OUT, WE KNEW THAT THIS WAS THE **SECOND** AND PERHAPS **FINAL** COMING OF THE **EXTRATERRESTRIAL "GODS"**.

RICK SPOTTED HER OVER THE HOOD OF OLD MAN BENCHLEY'S 1935 ROLLS CONTINENTAL PHANTOM II JUST AS HE WAS BENDING OVER TO RINSE AWAY THE TIDE OF SUDS FROM THE SPARKLING BLUE METAL. SHE WAS HEADING UP THE MARBLE STEPS BETWEEN THE ENORMOUS ALABASTER COLUMNS THAT FLANKED THE FRONT ENTRANCE TO BENCHLEY MANOR AND SOMETHING ABOUT THE WAY SHE MOVED AROUND INSIDE THAT TIGHT SUMMER DRESS MADE RICK PUT DOWN HIS SPONGE A MOMENT.

SHE WAS A LOOKER ALL RIGHT, RICK HAD SEEN A LOT OF RICH WITCH ENGULES WITH HIGH CHINS AND ROUND BUTTS COME AND GO THROUGH THAT DOOR BUT THIS ONE WAS REALLY EXCEPTIONAL, THIS ONE HAD STYLE. EVEN FROM HERE HE COULD SEE THAT.

NOW THE DOOR WAS OPENING AND OLD MAN BENCHLEY WAS LETTING HER IN. LOOK AT THE WAY SHE WIGGLED THROUGH...MAKING THE MOST OF THOSE AMPLE CURVES TO IMPRESS THE OLD MAN. AND, UNLESS THE OLD MAN HAD SUDDENLY GONE BLIND, HE WAS IMPRESSED! A SUDDEN TWINGE OF FEAR FLUTTERED IN RICK'S STOMACH, MAYBE HE'D BETTER SEE WHAT WAS WHAT...!

BEAUTIFUL SCREAMER











LOOK AT ALL THIS STUFF...
"ANALYSIS OF THE DREAM"...
"YOUR DREAMS AND YOU"... DOES
HE ACTUALLY READ ALL THIS JUNK?

THE OLD MAN'S CONVINCED
THAT DREAMS CAN FORETELL
THE FUTURE. HE'S BEEN COLLECTING
THOSE BOOKS FOR YEARS.



... "FORETELLING
THE FUTURE"... H-M-M...

... I THINK I'LL
JUST "BORROW" A
FEW OF THESE TONIGHT...!



THIS IS NUTS!
WE'RE BOTH GONNA END
UP IN THE SLAMMER!

SH! YOU WANT TO
WAKE HIM? JUST KEEP
QUIET AND HAND ME
THE SYRINGE...



YOU SURE THAT'S
THE RIGHT AMOUNT...
DON'T KILL HIM!

JUST SHUT UP
AND GET INTO THAT
CLOWN OUTFIT!



HURRY! I GOT
HIS EYES OPEN... START
JUGGLING!

OKAY! BUT I
FEEL RIDICULOUS!



NOW, WOULD YOU
MIND TELLING WHAT THAT
WAS ALL ABOUT?

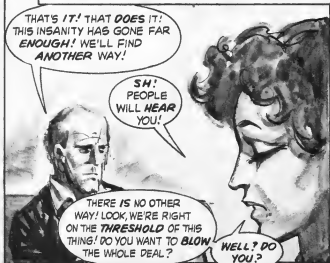
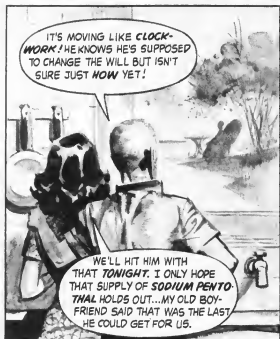
JUST ENGAGE
BENCHLEY IN SMALL
TALK TOMORROW WHEN
YOU DRIVE HIM TO THE
BANK... YOU'LL FIND OUT.



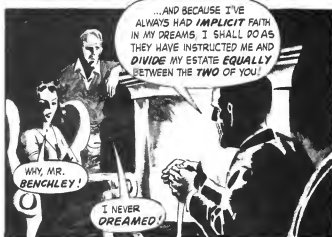
HAD THE STRANGEST
DREAM LAST NIGHT, RICKY.
KEPT SEEING CLOWNS JUGGLING
ORANGES ALL NIGHT. KNOW
WHAT THAT MEANS?

NO, SIR.

WELL, ACCORDING
TO MY BOOKS, CIRCUS CLOWNS
AND CARNIVALS ARE SYMBOLS
OF SUDDEN CHANGES IN BUSI-
NESS OR FINANCES...













PRADA WAS A SMALL TOWN, THOUGH ITS MERCHANT CLASS WAS **PROSPEROUS**. ITS REVENUES RICHLY SUPPORTED THE LORD ALPHONSE IN HIS CASTLE ON THE MOUNTAIN.

THE SHOPS AND HOMES OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE NESTLED BELOW IT, SURROUNDING AN ANCIENT CATHEDRAL. AND IN THE CHURCHES VERY SHADOW STOOD A MOST EXCEPTIONAL **PAWN SHOP**.

ITS PROPRIETRESS, **LORENZA DELACARTE**, WAS THE **PAWNBROKER**. BORN OF NOBLE STATION, HER ODD CHOICE OF **PROFESSION** AROUSED MUCH SPECULATION AMONG THE VILLAGERS.



DON VEGA, WHY GO TO SUCH PAINS TO **CONCEAL** YOUR IDENTITY. I HAVE **SEEN** YOUR VISAGE...IT IS NOT UNSIGHTLY ENOUGH TO WARRANT SUCH ELABORATE MASQUERADE.

I **WASN'T** BE **SEEN** HERE, BUT WE'VE AN URGENT AND DELICATE MATTER TO DISCUSS. RUMOR EXISTS THAT YOU HAVE CERTAIN **POWERS**...OF A **MAGICAL** NATURE.



WHATEVER YOU WISH IS **YOURS**, IF YOU CAN DELIVER WHAT I ASK.

VERY WELL, DON VEGA. THE BOND I REQUIRE FROM YOU IS **TIME**...SEVEN MINUTES OF YOUR LIFE.

WHAT?!

TIME TICKET



I'M EMPOWERED TO GRANT **ONE WISH**... WHATEVER YOU **REQUIRE**. BUT YOU MUST **RETURN THE GIFT** AND THIS IDENTIFICATION **WITHIN THIRTY DAYS**...

...OR **SEVEN MINUTES** WILL BE SUBTRACTED FROM YOUR ALLOTTED LIFE-SPAN. LOOK INTO THE CRYSTAL AND YOU WILL **UNDERSTAND**.



"WE STRUCK A **BARGAIN**. I COULD **KEEP** WHATEVER AMOUNTS OF TIME OTHER PEOPLE GAVE ME **WILLINGLY**, TO BE **SUBTRACTED** FROM THEIR OWN LIVES. I, IN TURN, HAD THE POWER TO GRANT THEIR **SINGLE** FONDEST WISH."



PREPOSTEROUS! WHY WOULD THE **DEVIL** ALLOW YOU TO PERFORM WORKS OF **GOOD WILL**? AND HOW IS IT THE **INQUISITORS** HAVE LEFT YOU UNTOUCHED?

THEY PURGE ONLY THE **INNOCENT**. THE TRULY **EVIL** ARE **PROTECTED** BY THEIR MASTER.



AS TO THE **DEVIL'S** GOOD WILL...THE WISHES HAVE A WAY OF WORKING OUT TO HIS **LIKING**.

NOW NAME YOUR DESIRE.

MONEY! I'M BEING **BLACKMAILED!** LADY AGATHA'S **MAIDSERVANT** CAUGHT ME DURING A MOMENTARY **INDISCRETION** WITH HER MISTRESS. SHE THREATENS TO DELIVER ME TO **LORD ALPHONSE**, UNLESS I PAY HER A TRULY **INCREDIBLE** TRIBUTE!

THOUGH I'M A MAN OF CONSIDERABLE **MEANS**, I COULDN'T HOPE TO RAISE THE SUM SHE DEMANDED IN TIME... WITHOUT YOUR **HELP**.



WILL THIS BE **SUFFICIENT?**

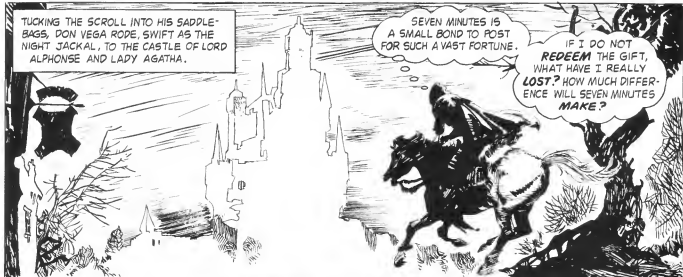
DEAR GOD!



I AM WRITING OUT OUR CONTRACT. REMEMBER YOU MUST **RETURN IT** AND THE **MONEY** WITHIN THIRTY DAYS, OR YOU **FORFEIT** SEVEN MINUTES OF YOUR LIFE.

THAT IS THE **MAXIMUM** I MAY TAKE FROM ANY ONE MAN.

YOU HAVE MY **GRATITUDE**, MADAM.





THE ALARM WAS GIVEN. EXHAUSTED, TERRIFIED DON VEGA WAS PURSUED TO THE EDGE OF THE VILLAGE BY THE LORD'S GUARDS. THERE HE LOST THEM, MOMENTARILY.



QUICKLY! I HAVE MURDERED THE MAIDSERVANT AND ALPHONSE WOULD HAVE MY LIFE! I HAVE BROUGHT BACK THE MONEY! I WISH TO REDEEM MY TIME!

CERTAINLY, DON VEGA. YOUR CONTRACT, PLEASE?



IT'S GONE! I LEFT IT IN MY SADDLEBAGS WHEN I RAN AWAY ON FOOT. PLEASE... IF I GO BACK FOR IT, THEY'LL KILL ME!

I'M SORRY, DON VEGA. THE TERMS OF OUR AGREEMENT WERE MADE CLEAR TO YOU AT THE OUTSET. BOTH THE MONEY AND THE CONTRACT MUST BE PRESENTED FOR REDEMPTION.

DON VEGA RETURNED TO THE CASTLE THE SAME WAY HE HAD LEFT IT... KEEPING A WARY EYE OUT FOR ALPHONSE'S PACK OF KILLERS.



HE HAD REACHED THE STABLE AND FOUND HIS STILL SADDLED STEED. THE SCROLL WAS IN HIS HANDS WHEN...



THERE HE IS!

STOP HIM!

DON VEGA LEPT ON HIS HORSE. HIS HEART WAS A KETTLEDUM, POUNDING TO A CRESCENDO. HE HEARD VOICES AND THE SOUND OF PURSUIT BEHIND HIM, BUT HE DIDN'T LOOK BACK.



HERE IS THE DAMNED CONTRACT! NOW RETURN THE TIME THAT IS RIGHTFULLY MINE!



IT IS DONE. SO LEAVE THIS PLACE, BEFORE...



IT TOOK LORENZA THE BETTER PART OF THE NIGHT TO COMPOSE THE LETTER TO LADY AGATHA. ANONYMOUSLY, IT INDICATED LORD ALPHONSE AS THE LOVER OF THE DEAD SERVANT GIRL AND ACCUSED HIM OF A MURDER OF SILENCE.

HER OWN PROMISCUITY NOTWITHSTANDING, LADY AGATHA WAS A JEALOUS WOMAN. SHE REACTED JUST AS LORENZA'S CRYSTAL BALL HAD PREDICTED, DRIVING A POINARD THROUGH HER HUSBAND'S HEART.

A MESSENGER WAS PAID HANDSOMELY TO DELIVER IT TO HER HANDS PERSONALLY.

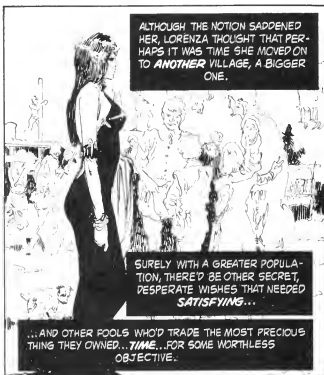


HER DEED WITNESSED BY THE MAN-SERVANT, LADY AGATHA WAS PROMPTLY ARRESTED.



EXACTLY TWENTY-FOUR DAYS AFTER THE RELEASE OF LORENZA DELACARTE, LADY AGATHA WAS PUBLICLY BEHEADED. LORENZA'S PROMISE TO LORD ALPHONSE WAS KEPT.

SHE MENTALLY ADDED ANOTHER SEVEN MINUTES TO THE TWELVE YEARS WHICH SHE HAD ALREADY ACCUMULATED.



ALTHOUGH THE NOTION SADDENED HER, LORENZA THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS IT WAS TIME SHE MOVED ON TO ANOTHER VILLAGE, A BIGGER ONE.

SURELY WITH A GREATER POPULATION, THERE'D BE OTHER SECRET, DESPERATE WISHES THAT NEEDED SATISFYING...

...AND OTHER FOOLS WHO'D TRADE THE MOST PRECIOUS THING THEY OWNED...TIME...FOR SOME WORTHLESS OBJECTIVE..

SHE SMILED AS SHE THOUGHT OF DON VEGA'S QUERY ABOUT THE DEVIL'S 'GOOD WILL' AND HER OWN REPLY:

'SOMEHOW THE WISHES ALWAYS SEEM TO TURN OUT TO THE MASTER'S LIKING.'

CLOSED

SHE SHRUGGED HER SHOULDERS AND WENT INSIDE TO PACK.





THE ORANGE BUD OF THE **NUCLEAR MUSHROOM** HAD BLOSSOMED AGAIN, SENDING ITS SHOCK WAVE ROOTS DEEP INTO THE EARTH, OPENING FISSURES... LINKING PATHS TO THE SURFACE.



UNDISTURBED FOR BILLIONS OF YEARS, A DORMANT **CREATURE** OZZED TO THE SURFACE. THOUGH **WITHOUT** BODY OR FORM, IT WAS NONETHELESS A LIVING BEING...



...A **MEAT-EATER!**

LOUSY **FOG!**
THICK AS SOUP!

THE ORGANISM'S HUNT FOR NOURISHMENT WAS PURELY INSTINCTIVE, BUT IT TASTED SOMETHING IN THIS PREY IT FOUND DELICIOUS. PERHAPS IT WAS THE RNA IN THE SWAMPMAN'S LIQUIFIED BRAIN. THERE WAS A SOUND MIXED IN WITH IT. THE SOUND WAS...

FOG



THE FOG LEFT THE CALCIUM.
IT ONLY WANTED THE FLESH
AND THE RNA...



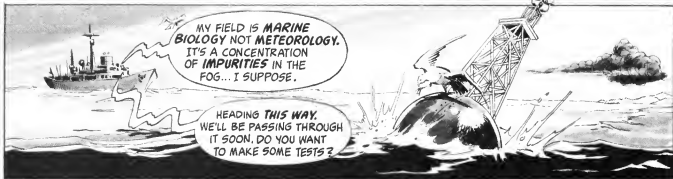
...AND THE WORLD WAS **FULL** OF
THAT **SCRUMPTIOUS** STUFF!

FOG'S
ROLLING IN.



YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING
AT THE HAZE FOR HOURS,
REED. WHAT FASCINATES
YOU SO ABOUT IT?

THE LAND'S OVER THERE,
MOLLY, AND I'VE SEEN A **DARK
SPOT** SWEEP OVER IT LIKE THE
ANGEL OF DEATH. WHAT DO
YOU MAKE OF IT?



MY FIELD IS **MARINE
BIOLOGY** NOT **METEOROLOGY**.
IT'S A CONCENTRATION
OF **IMPURITIES** IN THE
FOG... I SUPPOSE.

HEADING **THIS WAY**.
WE'LL BE PASSING THROUGH
IT SOON. DO YOU WANT
TO MAKE SOME TESTS?



NOT REALLY, BUT I'D
LOVE A BIT OF THE
BRANDY YOU KEEP IN
YOUR CABIN, TO TAKE
THE CHILL OUT OF
MY **BONES**.

SOUNDS LIKE A FINE
IDEA TO ME. NO NEED
TO STAY HERE AND
COUGH ON **SMOG**.

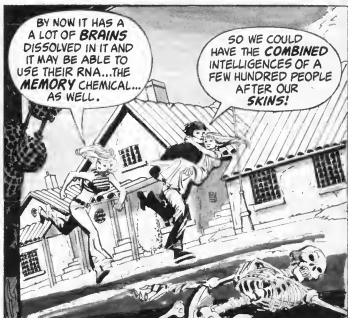


I DON'T THINK
EVEN BRANDY WILL BE
ABLE TO STILL THIS **EERIE**
FEELING I HAVE **FLOWING**
THROUGH MY **MARROW**.

I KNOW WHAT YOU
MEAN. I... DO YOU HEAR
A **BANGING** NOISE?





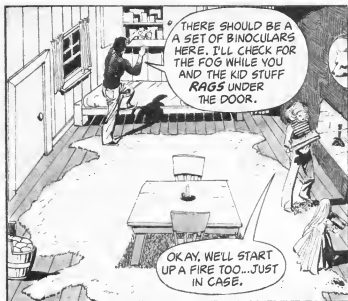






THE DARK BEAST WAS
AGITATED BY THE HEAT
AND LIGHT. IT CHURNED
WITH CONFUSION AS IT
SOUGHT AN ESCAPE.
WATER: THE FIRE CAN
NOT EXIST IN WATER. A
VOICE EXPLAINED. THE
FOG BEGAN TO
CHANGE.

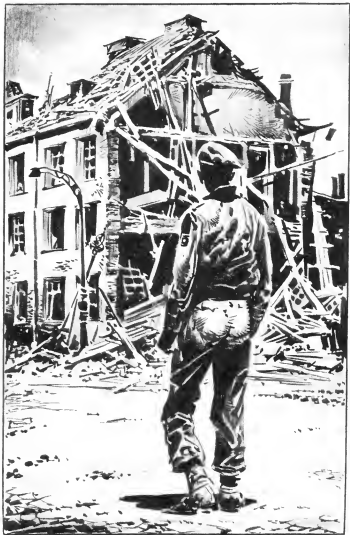




PROLOGUE

LONDON, 1940. RAIN SPLATTERED THE WEST END WITH A SOUND LIKE SIZZLING BACON. THE SKY WAS HAZY, OVERCAST, MOON-CORPSE-PALE. NERVOUSLY, THE SOLDIER **WHISTLED** THE TUNE HE HAD BEEN TOLD TO WHISTLE.

THE TENEMENT BECKONED HIM FORWARD, STIRRING MEMORIES OF A WAR BUDDY, LEFT GUTTED AND ABANDONED, BUT NOT COMPLETELY DEAD.



FIRST, ERIC, LET ME APOLOGIZE FOR THE STRINGENT SECURITY PRECAUTIONS. YOU'LL UNDERSTAND THE **NECESSITY** WHEN I GIVE YOU THE DETAILS OF YOUR NEXT MISSION.

YES, MAJOR CROSSLAND.



YOURS IS A SPECIAL TASK FORCE. THE TACTICS YOU APPLY WOULD SCANDALIZE CIVILIANS; NONETHELESS, THEY'RE EFFECTIVE. THE GERMANS HAVE ISSUED A SPECIAL **DIRECTIVE**...THEY WANT THE SQUAD FOUND AND DESTROYED.

ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE CAPTURED BY THE NAZIS...BREAK...DEFECT...AND WILLINGLY BETRAY YOUR PLATOON. ONCE YOU'VE GAINED THE NAZIS' CONFIDENCE, YOU'LL BE IN A POSITION TO--

BUT THE MEN...THEY'LL BE SLAUGHTERED!

NO...**SACRIFICED**! THIS IS A PHOTO OF ERWIN ROMMEL. HE MUST BE **ASSASSINATED** BEFORE THE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGNS GET UNDERWAY.

WHEN HE DISCOVERS THE VALUE OF YOUR INFORMATION, ROMMEL WILL WISH TO QUESTION YOU **PERSONALLY**. AND YOU WILL THEN BE CLOSE ENOUGH TO HIM TO **KILL** HIM.

MY ORDERS?





BY TREASON'S KNIFE

LIBYA, 1940. THE OFFICIAL ORDERS: TO SIEZE AND OCCUPY A SMALL NATIVE VILLAGE ON THE PERIMETER OF ENEMY TERRITORY. STRATEGICALLY UNIMPORTANT, THE GERMANS NONETHELESS SEEMED PROFOUNDLY **RELUCTANT** TO GIVE UP.

THE SUN WAS SCORCHING...THE DESERT, SCORCHED. BOMBS BURST LIKE KERNELS OF POPCORN, AND THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE WAS AS **STEADY** AS THE TICKING OF A WATCH.

ERIC WAS AMAZED THAT HE WAS NOT YET **DEAD**. THROUGHOUT THE BATTLE HIS THOUGHTS HAD DRIFTED TO NADYA, WORKING IN A TAVERN ONE HUNDRED MILES SOUTH...OF CROSSLAND, CASUALLY TRADING THREE DAMNED GOOD SOLDIERS FOR ONE ENEMY GENERAL AS THOUGH THEY WERE BASEBALL CARDS...

**BRA-
WHOM!**



...AND OF THE MEN THEMSELVES...**MITCHELL, BROWN AND THE BARD**...HIS COMRADES OF THIRTY-SEVEN MISSIONS, ALL SUCCESSFUL. FOR MOMENTS AT A TIME, HE WOULD FORGET COMPLETELY THE FACT THAT HE WAS UNDER FIRE.

THE BATTLE RAGED UNTIL **SUNSET**.

SMOKE AND SAND CLEARED FROM THE BLOOD-STAINED BATTLEFIELD, REVEALING BROKEN MEN AND EQUIPMENT. THE ENGLISH WERE TOO BUSY NURSING THE LIVING AND ROBBING THE DEAD TO FEEL MUCH SENSE OF VICTORY.

WHAT'S GOIN' ON, MITCHELL?

...LIKE I TOLD YOU, ERIC, IT'S A **PERSONAL** THING WITH ME. I KEEP A **SOUVENIR** OF EVERY MAN I KILL...SORTA LIKE A TROPHY.

I'D TAKE THE WHOLE BODY BUT AIN'T A TANKER-MIST'D TOUCH IT.

THEY SURVIVED...ALL OF THEM. WHY COULDN'T THEY HAVE DIED, AND SPARED ME THEIR LOOKS OF SHOCKED **HATRED** WHEN I SELL THEM OUT?

"I'LL JOIN WITH BLACK DESPAIR AGAINST MY SOUL, AND TO MYSELF BECOME AN ENEMY"

SHAKESPEARE. 'RICHARD III' YOUR GLUM EXPRESSION MADE IT SEEM APPROPRIATE. WE WON. YOU SHOULD BE CELEBRATING.

THIS IS **WAR!** THERE IS NO CELEBRATION WITHOUT MOURNING

BLAM

GUNSHOTS! THERE'S **BROWN!**

BLAM

THE BARD WAS A SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR BEFORE THE WAR. EDUCATED AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY FOR DRAMATIC ARTS. HE WAS ALSO ONE HELL OF A **MARKSMAN**.

WHAT'S THAT THING IN YOUR BELT, BROWN?

BAM

A **WOODOO DOLL**.

WHEN I WAS A BOY, MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD STORIES THAT MADE MY **HAIR** UN CURL. I'VE TOLD YOU SOME OF THEM.

BLAM

I THOUGHT MAYBE I COULD PUT A FEW OF THOSE IDEAS INTO **ACTION**, SO I MADE THIS **DOLL**.



TAKE A LOOK, ERIC! IT SYMBOLIZES **DER FUEHRER**. I PLAN TO FIGHT HIM WITH **MAGIC** AS WELL AS GUNS. HAVEN'T HAD MUCH LUCK YET BUT WHAT THE HELL... I'M A NOVICE.

BEHIND YOU! ERIC!

UGH!

YOU...YOU SAVED MY LIFE...!

YOU ACT LIKE IT'S A CURSE. GRATITUDE COMES CHEAP ANYWAY. JUST DO THE SAME FOR ME IF YOU EVER HAVE THE CHANCE!



BLAM

BLAM



ARRGGGH!

SHE'D SERVED WHAT SEEMED LIKE A PLATOON OF GERMAN SOLDIERS SINCE HER ARRIVAL. SHE'D SMILED, FLIRTED, ACTED AS MUCH LIKE THE OTHER GIRLS AS POSSIBLE. AND NADYA HAD WAITED.



SHE WAS WAITING FOR COL. ROLF KEPPLER, RIGHT-HAND PUPPET OF GENERAL ROMMEL. KEPPLER FREQUENTED SUCH ESTABLISHMENTS OCCASIONALLY. SHE HOPED SOONER OR LATER HE'D HIT THIS ONE.

IT WAS SOONER.



GUTEN NACHT, FRAULEIN. TONIGHT YOU ARE HONORED TO HAVE AS YOUR GUEST, COL. ROLF KEPPLER!



KEPPLER!

MY REPUTATION PRECEEDS ME. I'M FLATTERED!



FILTH!
NAZI
FILTH!

YOU ARE ENGLISH, FRAULEIN? DO YOU KNOW TO WHOM YOU ARE SPEAKING?



I KNOW YOU, KEPPLER. YOU KILLED MY PARENTS AND MY SISTER. I WILL SERVE THE OTHER NAZI VERMIN, BUT I WILL NOT SERVE YOU!



PROVOKE HIM...THOSE HAD BEEN MAJOR CROSS-LAND'S ORDERS!



YOU'RE NOT FIT TO LICK THE FEET OF A PIG!

WHAS?



MY BROTHER'S WITH A SPECIAL BRITISH TASK FORCE. THEY'RE HERE TO PAVE THE WAY FOR A FULL INVASION! THEY'RE GOING TO FLUSH YOU OUT OF THIS CONTINENT ONCE AND FOR ALL!

GENERAL ROMMEL WILL BE DELIGHTED WITH THE NEWS! ARREST HER!



THIS HAS GONE ON ALL NIGHT. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE ENGLISHMAN WON'T TALK.

TAKE THE WOMAN OUT AND SHOOT HER.



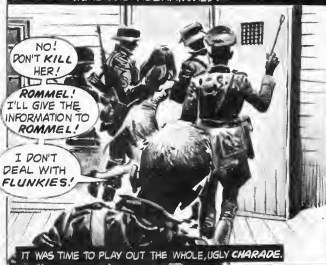
NO! NO!

ERIC WAS AWARE OF HIS OWN LIGHTEADEDNESS...AS THOUGH SOMEONE HAS REMOVED HIS BRAIN AND SUBSTITUTED WHIPPED CREAM. HIS THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS WERE PREPROGRAMMED.

NO! DON'T KILL HER!

ROMMEL! I'LL GIVE THE INFORMATION TO ROMMEL!

I DON'T DEAL WITH FLUNKIES!



IT WAS TIME TO PLAY OUT THE WHOLE, UGLY CHARADE.

TELL US WHERE WE CAN FIND THE REST OF YOUR TROOP. YOU WILL WATCH AS YOUR COMPANIONS DIE. THEN YOU WILL TALK TO GENERAL ROMMEL AND TELL HIM ALL YOU KNOW.



THEN WE WILL RELEASE YOUR SISTER.

FOR A MOMENT, HIS JAW TIGHTENED; HE THOUGHT IT WOULD NEVER AGAIN OPEN. SOME MERCIFUL GOD WAS INTERVENING TO PREVENT THIS JUDAS-ACT. BUT THEN IT RELAXED. IN A BARELY AUDIBLE VOICE, HE WHISPERED...



FOLLOW ME!

"NOW COULD I, CASCA, NAME TO THEE A MAN MOST LIKE THIS DEADFUL NIGHT..."

INDEED, THE GREAT TRAGEDY OF BETRAYAL

THAT'S FROM JULIUS CAESAR, AIN'T IT?



HEY, BARD, LOOK AT THIS. IF I CAN'T GIVE DER FUHRER A FEW PAINS WITH THIS ONE, HE AIN'T HUMAN.

YOU'LL ENTER FIRST...SIMPLE PRE-CAUTION TO AVOID TRAPS.



ERIC SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED HITTING THE FLOOR AND YELLING 'IT'S A TRAP!'

BUT THE MEN WERE UNPREPARED...THERE WAS NO TIME. A WARNING WOULD ONLY ALERT THE **GERMANS** THAT HE WAS A FRAUD. SO HE STOOD SILENTLY BY AS REALIZATION DAWNED ON THE FACES OF FRIENDS BETRAYED.

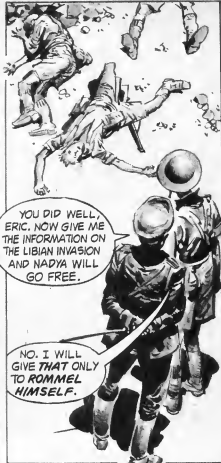


ERIC WAS SICK.

IN THE DEATH ROOM, BROWN STILL CLUNG TO LIFE, AND TO HIS 100000 DOLL.. HE WHISPERED WORDS...**SOUNDS** ANCIENT AND FORBIDDEN, HEARD LONG AGO AND ALMOST FORGOTTEN.



WHEN BROWN FINALLY DIED, THE WORD 'TRAITOR' WAS ON HIS LIPS.



YOU DID WELL, ERIC. NOW GIVE ME THE INFORMATION ON THE LIBIAN INVASION AND NADYA WILL GO FREE.

NO. I WILL GIVE THAT ONLY TO ROMMEL HIMSELF.

ERIC WAS NO LONGER SICK, MERELY NUMB. HE THOUGHT HE'D BEEN AWAITING GENERAL ROMMEL SEVERAL HOURS BUT HE DIDN'T REMEMBER. HE THOUGHT: "I HAVE MURDERED SLEEP." IT REMINDED HIM OF THE BARD AND HE WAS SICK AGAIN.



FINALLY...

SO YOU ARE THE GREAT ROMMEL...THE MAN SO DANGEROUS YOU WERE WORTH THREE OF THE BEST GODDAMNED HUMAN BEINGS I'VE EVER KNOWN.

YOU'RE A FOOL. MAJOR CROSSLAND IS A **DOUBLE AGENT** WORKING FOR **ME**. THE DERRINGER CONCEALED IN YOUR BOOT IS LOADED WITH **BLANKS**...TRY IT.

BIAM BAM

ERIC THOUGHT HIS **SANITY** HAD FINALLY LEFT. HE FELT **BLOOD** WELL UP IN HIS THROAT, GAGGING HIM...GOD, HE WAS DROWNING IN THE STUFF.

IT WAS ALL A TRICK. YOUR SQUAD HAD BECOME A NUISANCE. WE NEEDED A **SCAPEGOAT** TO DRAW SUSPICION AWAY FROM CROSSLAND, SO WE SELECTED YOU. ERIC DREYFUSS, TRAITOR. HOW DOES IT FEEL?

GUILT? SUPERNATURAL REVENGE? SUICIDE? ERIC WASN'T SURE.

BLOOD SPURTED FROM HIS MOUTH AND NOSTRILS, FILLED HIS LUNGS AND STAINED THE EARTH.

ERIC DIED WITHOUT EVER LEARNING THE CAUSE, THOUGH HE KNEW IT ANYWAY.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE WOMAN, **NADYA**, HERR GENERAL?

RELEASE HER. SHE STILL DOESN'T SUSPECT THAT CROSSLAND IS A DOUBLE SO SHE'LL CONTINUE TO WORK FOR HIM.

AND GIVE THIS POOR BASTARD A DECENT GRAVE.

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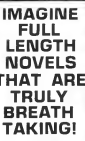
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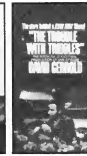
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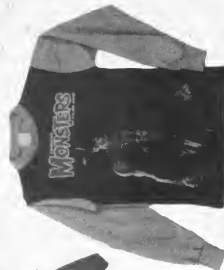
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